

Deconstructing the Frame: Siting Absence

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“Capitalists no longer [rush for the] gold, but for the totality of the world’s images.” (Virilio, 2002, pp. 58-59)

Our contemporary social landscape is increasingly inscribed and articulated through images. With the proliferation of televisual mediums, the image has become the primary vehicle mediating social relationships, impinging on our experience of both self and other (Debord, 1978). As Virilio (2002) avers, the drive of capitalism seeks to appropriate the imagistic code as a bid for mastery over the symbolic order. In this manner, the media/ed images that flood the social terrain are often ciphers of ideological de/sign. In other words, signs are often ideologically ‘stabilized’ as connotations of *other* signs, forming an abstract, positive calculus of signification. In this vein, images are never ‘of themselves,’ but of an ambient/diffuse order. Particularly in designer capitalism, ambient signification is deployed as a way to disclose much more than the product ‘itself’. As Barthes (1996) demonstrates in *Mythologies*, signs function as *networks* of signification. Contemporary media orchestrates the arrangement of such sign systems as a way to evoke consumer desire by (pr)offering a ‘lost object,’ - an *objet a*. As a cipher of desire, the lost object is no longer inscribed under the guise of a consumer *need*, but rather, as the consumer imperative to “Enjoy!” Yet,

implicit to the obligation of consumer enjoyment is a *caveat*. That which we have been sanctioned to enjoy as consumers is liable to disorienting slippage.

Dark Side of the Image: The New Frame of Racism

Folk Duo *Prussian Blue* (see photo below) have garnered recent attention from ABC's Primetime and BBC documentarian Louis Theroux. Its members, twin girls Lamb and Lynx Gaede, appear as typified thirteen year olds invested in contemporary cultural ideals of beauty and appearance. It is in part because their look is so *familiar*, so *naturalized*, that they have transfixed the public's attention. In the media, they have been likened to a young Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen, playing off similar registers of ostensible purity and wholesomeness. Yet, such a comparison ultimately derails. While the duo's name 'innocuously' refers to the eye color of the girls, it also points to the status they assume is conferred by their 'Aryan descent'. In a more sinister turn, *Prussian Blue* refers to the Zyklon B by-product of concentration camp gas chambers.



While the guitarist/violinist duo enact the signs of a contemporary image ideal, their lyrical message is decidedly white nationalist, attracting the media moniker “Cute Klux Klan.” Central to the recent spectacle surrounding the duo is the negotiation of these two seemingly incommensurate images. On one hand, *Prussian Blue* enact the aesthetic ideal of the blue-eyed, blonde-haired, ‘angelic’ young woman, while on the other, they evoke the signs of a violence tinged white separatist communiqué. In this sense, much outrage has been directed toward the perversion of the imaginary figure of childhood enacted by *Prussian Blue*. While children have been used as political proxies throughout history, these images have often been sanctioned by mass media as connotations of unadulterated hope, innocence, and purity. By playing these conventional features across a register of racial segregation, a latent anxiety over the ideal ensues. That is, the seemingly innocuous image of *Prussian Blue* carries an obscene supplement.

The sensationalized story of *Prussian Blue* pivots on a second recoding. That is, *Prussian Blue* marks an imagistic break from prototypical depictions of neo-Nazi skinheads and hooded Klansmen. In this sense, *Prussian Blue* are a product of savvy promotion that liberally draws from ‘accepted’ portrayals of youth in media. Musically, the girl’s folk approach is a stark comparison to the testosterone driven punk of white separatist/supremacist “oi” bands such as Skrewdriver and Rahowa. The palpable hatred of neo-Nazism is supplemented by *Prussian Blue*’s ‘assumed’ nativity and demure status. Further, their style conscious stage presence marks a significant shift from the paramilitaristic appearance of many pro white youth. In a recent photo shoot for a pro-white clothing company, the girls modeled t-shirts depicting iconic happy faces bearing the distinctive features of Adolph Hitler (‘Happy Hitler Shirts’). In the photo, the girls smile as if the connotation of such an image were reducible to merely being “funny” (<http://prussianbluefan.blogspot.com/>). On stage, the girls sing lyrics

such as "Aryan man awake/ How much more can you take/ Turn that Fear to Hate/ Aryan man awake" over down tempo folk progressions. In such gestures, *Prussian Blue* suggests a reframing of the cite of racism, a reframing that closely impinges on the image ideals and penchant for spectacle intimate to de/signer capitalism.

An Inquiry of De/sign

Beyond the 'straightforward' conveyance of meaning, imagistic de/signs provide the coordinates from which meaning is derived. From the Latin *de* (out) and *signare* (to mark), the notion of *de/sign* intimates the arbitrary correspondence of signifier and signified as posited by Saussure (1974). In such correspondence, an utterance, image, or word is tied to a concept, (design)at(ing) a recognizable meaning, that is, a meaning made recognizable in its circulation as an axiom. As *cultural conventions*, the sign (as the correlative relationship of signifier and signified) orients and inscribes its users, constituting a perspectival matrix, an ideological (a)skew mis(recognized) as reality. *Marked out* in such a way as to *enable* the transparent communication and reception of specific meanings (while censuring others), the de/sign becomes a cite of ideological motivation. This motivated claim to meaning is often an undetectable feature that acts to mediate representation, disappearing to the extent that we participate in its circulation as an incontrovertible reality. Proximity has this b(l)inding effect, just as the assumed zero point proximity between signifier and signifier b(l)inds meaning. Saussure's conceptualization of the sign as a neutral and transparent reflection of its referent is thus complicit in de/sign, an enframing of reality which mediates reality. While *signare* denotes a mark, de/sign marks the 'limit' of signification through ontological enframing. The portmanteau word de/sign is thus deployed to suggest the motivated connection between the sign and its referent. Further, while *signare* presumes the innocuity of meaning, *de/signare*

connotes its enframement, thereby attributing both an interiority and exteriority to the sign 'itself'. By bringing attention to de/sign, meaning might be read in a way as to understand its actualization through enframement, or rather, its realization as an effect of Symbolic biopower. Similarly, the often-occluded position of the frame is directly implicated in the productive function of de/sign, which in turn serves as a site for critical analysis and intervention.

As the correspondent coupling of signifier and signified, de/sign functions to enframe meaning. This notion of de/sign is apparent in the use of vignette throughout the 17th century. As a term originally applied to describe the elaborate border work surrounding printed text and images, vignette functions like a frame, forming a perspectival cut between the work's 'interior' and 'exterior'. As Derrida (1991) suggests, "If we are to approach a text, it must have an edge" (p. 256). The de/sign functions similarly. As a '*marking out*,' de/sign motivates the interiority of meaning while concomitantly suggesting the spuriousness of a work's 'external' adjuncts. In Kantian (2001) terms, the frame is *parergonal*, an incidental or "by-work". Kant describes palace colonnades, statue drapery and the frame of a painting as adjuvant to the *ergonal* work 'in itself'. In Kant's analysis of aesthetic meaning, he notes how the intrinsic features of the artwork in no way rely upon *parergonal* features such as the frame for their meaning. For Kant, the frame functions best when conceived as an invisible, 'helpful' adjunct to the autonomous artwork. The *parergon* is thus placed under metaphysical erasure, organized subordinately to the *ergon*. The cut introduced between the artwork and its context is critical to Kant's analysis, which supposes beauty as an *a priori* universal condition, a transcendental feature of the *ergon*. In order to secure the place of 'beauty' as an intrinsic feature of the work 'in itself,' Kant relies upon a *discourse of the frame* in demarcating the cut between the interiority

transcendental features of the work, and its external, contingent 'by works' (Derrida, 1992).

De/sign parallels the conceptual demarcation performed by *enframing*. This performance, of course, introduces a perspectival split similar to Kant's conceptualization of the *parergonal* 'by-work'. As a 'marking out,' de/sign initiates *presence*. Though borders have a tendency toward invisibility, they concomitantly have the effect of drawing attention and organizing the gaze toward the *ergonal* work proper. In this manner, de/sign suggests synchronic coherence, analogous to the arbitrary coupling of signifier and signified. One favorite *Far Side* cartoon stages the disappearance of the frame in art spectatorship. In it, a crowd of precocious art connoisseurs are met with a homely mother's proud boast: "My son made the frame". The absurdity of the gag emerges in part through the attention Larson brings to the frame, exposing its subordinate, derisory status. If the mother had pronounced "My son painted this," thereby drawing attention to the work, the cartoon loses its humorous effect. Similarly, Larson's drawing exposes the locus of the gaze in artistic viewing. The reaction from the crowd of spectators is one of absurd deferral from the *ergon* to the *parergon*. The focal point thereby becomes the 'by-product,' the limit or border by which the work proper becomes possible. In this sense, the punch line of this cartoon perhaps evokes a latent anxiety, evoking laughter as a defense mechanism. Such anxiety arises at the interstitial points of excess in a discourse of the frame, namely, borders, margins and the *cut* of divisibility. A further sense of absurdity in the cartoon is perhaps also fueled by the crowd's realization that the borders of the privileged work are constructed by an *undesirable other*. In a sense, the excess that is the *parergon* returns to disturb the act of looking, an act predicated on the fundamental cut inner/outer. In this sense, the 'in crowd' of art connoisseurship always gains its status from the 'out crowd' of popular media consumption.

De/sign as a 'marking out' performs internal coherence and stability, suggesting the illusion of 'things in themselves'. This gesture reinforces a 'reality principal' of *essences*, or features particular to the *ergon*. For Kant, the reality principal evoked by de/sign situates meaning, value and beauty as intrinsic features of the *ergonal* work. In this manner, the de/sign initiates a sense of timelessness, consolidating the image in 'freeze frame'.

As meaning collapses with de/sign, a similar effect is evidenced. For example, current discourse surrounding 'Terrorism Studies' situates the image of the 'terrorist' within the anxiety-inducing frame of "an older colonial discourse of the despotic and licentious Oriental male" (Rai, 2004, p. 538). As Rai (2004) avers, connotations of monstrosity have been deployed throughout history in support of a disciplinary apparatus tied to sexuality, race and later, biopolitical power. It is in establishing a chain of signification from the Islamic male to homosexuality that connotations of sexual deviancy are evoked. This is poignantly played out in Rai's reading of the Terror-Tali Tubby, a figure that acts as the *mis-en-scène* for the perversion of the Islamic psyche. The Islamic 'terrorist' receives both 'name' and location in its de/sign(ated) frame of abnormality and monstrosity (Rai, 2004). Such a frame serves a domesticating function, inscribing the terrorist into a symbolic order narrative of the Other. In this sense, the de/sign enacts a double gesture. It works to not only essentialize abnormality and thereby mobilize Western anxiety, it similarly functions to reinforce the *normalcy* and ego-consolidation of the Western psyche. While inducing the *presence* of normality, the function of de/sign similarly works to evacuate disruptive excesses. In this sense, the excess of de/sign would be considered *parergonal*, a subordinate 'by-work'. This is perhaps similar for those fringe groups who lie at the *margins* of *normalized* society, rather than exterior to it. As Freire (2002) suggests, "The truth is, that the oppressed are not 'marginals,' are not people

living 'outside' society. They have always been 'inside' – inside the structure which made them 'being for others' (p. 71). Such citizens become considered incidental, and in so many cases, become the invisible frame for the *norm* – the excess of what the norm must disallow in order to maintain its de/signated meaning. The cite created in such a scenario is thus one predicated on the presence/absence split.

Even in our own field of vision, our *de/signing eye*, we experience an illusory wholeness while 'filling' out the absence. As light enters the eye via the lens and pupil, it strikes the photoreceptors of the retina. This process is similar to the function of a camera, wherein light passing through the aperture exposing the film. However, a major difference between the two processes lie in the fact that the retina is not an entirely coherent cellular field. Interrupted by the base of the optic nerve, a small area of the retina contains no photoreceptors, constituting a 'blind spot' which makes vision possible! We do not experience this blind spot as such due to a function of the brain that *fills in* this perpetual gap. A second reason we do not experience this 'blind spot' is due to rapid eye movement, which adequately compensates for a lack in perceptual information. That we do not experience a 'blind spot' in our field of vision suggests the role of mental processes in viewing. The lack that necessarily precludes viewing as a 'blindness' is 'filled out by the 'brain,' entailing the illusion of a coherent perspectival field. For example, a glimpse of oneself in a full-length mirror *appears* coherent by way of a mental supplement. What we would consider an *absence* in looking is *given*. To return to the mirror analogy, consider how different our psychical formation would be if Lacan's Mirror stage had reflected an "I" offset by two points of *absence*, that is, the blind spots of both eyes. My point here is that the assumption of a coherent "I" as reflected in the mirror is in part predicated upon supplementary information from the brain. As many neuroscientists might corroborate, the brain inevitably makes meaning of *all* information received from the eye

organ. *My* interest here is how mental process is implicated in establishing a coherent, uninterrupted field of vision. This field of vision, in turn, is implicated not only in identity formation, but in a fundamental assumption between looking and *presence*.

Optically, *presence* is predicated upon an omitted *absence*. The image as *given* is always under the erasure of what it *absents*, or cannot see. This aspect of perception is mirrored in a function of de/sign, wherein meaning is 'filled in' through *enframent*. As I suggested earlier, an effect of signification is to render something *present*, knowable, and stable. This is in part a fantasy of coherence posited by the biology of optics. Those aspects of meaning that would constitute a type of 'blind spot,' or destabilization of coherence are *filled in*. This *filling in* is also apparent in the performance of de/sign, that is, a border-marking intimate to ideology. Absence, marginality and ambivalence become 'blind spots', or cites of potential rupture in meaning. As a remedy, de/sign functions to stabilize and maintain the impression of coherent meaning. Yet, akin to optical transmission, de/signated meaning is punctuated by 'blind spots,' absent aspects that 'cannot be seen'. These unseen absent features are requirements of meaning 'itself', their omission the condition for the circulation of the *one* meaning (*logos*).

In this sense, de/sign is performative, upgrading the *power of display*. It performs *presence*, even if it is the presence of *absence*. As an example, at the end of Duchamp's relationship with the Paris Dadaists, he declined Dada co-founder Tristan Tzara's request to produce a number of pieces for an exhibit at the Galerie Montaigne. While the exhibitors waited and planned for Duchamp's submissions, they never arrived, as Duchamp refused to produce any work on behalf of the show. Consequently, in the gallery space prepared for Duchamp's pieces hung empty frames. Though we could imagine how one might confuse these empty frames as readymades, they would still linger with an overwhelming sense of *absence*. As reminders of the artist's absence

the frames mobilize the coincident effect of bringing the artist to mind. The lack presented in Duchamp's absence is filled with his presence. The empty frames, while performing an absence, similarly marked the dissolution of Duchamp's relationship with the Parisian Dadaist movement. In the lack of the *ergon*, the exposed whitewashed surface interior to the frame becomes an empty signifier for the drama between Duchamp and his dada contemporaries, his friends, and relations. The canvas was filled, as it were, with speculation and gossip. The glaring absence of the image, the *ergonal* 'thing itself', was averted in making a spectacle of the absent works. Of course, given the *nonretinal* orientation of Duchamp and others producing under the equally empty signifier 'Dada', this kind of spectacle seems like a potential staging. It does however, remind us of the Kantian specter in spectatorship, derailing the perceptual expectation of looking and *presence*. The blank frame interiors similarly expose active interpellation in viewing. Interrupting the *absence* of Duchamp's work, the interpretive action of 'filling in', or filling the frame with meaning circumvents the abyss of the Other's desire. The sense of enigma posited by the blank frames is evacuated by a myriad of speculations that constitute an 'interiority,' even if no such interior exists.

Something similar can be said of de/sign. Though the b(l)inding of signifier and signified purports an *essence*, meaning is never solely a function of interiority. For example, the signifier "cat" and the signified concept do not express an *essential* 'catness'. As Saussure (1974) avers, the signification "cat" is bound in a play of difference. In this meaning, a cat is such not because it embodies an *essential catness*, but because it isn't a dog, a bird, a fish, etc. Signification, for Saussure, is always located and bound within a system of difference. As Derrida avers, "The elements of signification function not through the compact force of their nuclei but rather through a network of oppositions that distinguishes them and relates them to one another" (Derrida, 1991, p. 63).

Diachronically, we know from historical recollections that beliefs surrounding the cat have wavered significantly over the past millennium. For example, from 1400 to 1700, large numbers of cats in Western society were tortured and burned due to their association with witchcraft. As a pagan symbol of ancient cultures such as the Norse, the cat became positioned, in difference, against the mores of the Catholic Church. What is assumed to be essential, *ergonal*, becomes highly contingent upon *parergonal* enframing. However, this framing disappears, for example, to the extent that the cat becomes synonymous with witchcraft. In this case, it is apparent how de/sign is employed as an apparatus of power, framing the feline at the interstice of religio-judicial discourse. In this sense, the *parergonal* framework which initiates a coherent meaning by suggesting *ergonal* essence becomes a permeable borderline. Simply, what we might understand as an essential *catness* is contextually contingent. The borderline as a means of suggesting coherence is porous. This is most apparent in the prior example of 'Duchamp's' empty frames. While the art spectators were confronted with an *absence* (of both work and artist) performed by the frame, this borderline is eclipsed in interpellation. The *ergonal* void as a 'blind spot' is 'filled in' with the drama surrounding Duchamp's refusal. This supposes that the frame is less a fixed structure than a porous limin (Latin for "threshold"), destabilizing the notion of the *ergonal* work 'in itself'.

Citing the Cut

In his analysis of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (2001), Derrida (1978) addresses the question of aesthetics by examining the structure of Kant's argument, a structure predicated upon a series of *oppositions*, the foremost of which being the binary relation of pure reason/practical reason. This essay has attempted to follow another of Kant's separations, the cut of object/subject. Derrida's reading is situated at

the cite of the cut. What is it that makes such a cut possible? Derrida's reading of this *cut* implicates the frame. Does it perform what Kant assumes?

The frame, for Derrida, is a complicated apparatus. While Kant insists it is a 'by work' of *ergonal* art, Derrida questions the assumption that the frame is subordinate to the *ergonal* work proper. As Kant suggests, a frame, while separate from the transcendental features of the work 'in itself', can either enhance or severely impoverish an artwork. The work proper thus derives meaning from its constitutive frame, and is therefore conflated to the *parergonal* 'by-work'. In my earlier discussion of *de/sign*, this insight suggests that the frame functions to establish and demarcate 'interior relationships', or what I have termed elsewhere as *essences*. The 'thing in itself' is thus always dependent upon enframing. As Derrida notes, "the signified concept is never present in and of itself, in a sufficient presence that would refer only to itself" (Derrida, 1991, p. 63). If the frame is shifted, akin the diachronic shifting meaning attributed to cats, the illusory 'thing in itself' also changes. Yet this change is never complete. The trace of older frames still remain, however much they are displaced by the most prominent features of *re/de/sign*. The image as an assumed coherent text "is henceforth no longer a finished corpus...but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces" (Derrida, 1991, p. 257). This notion is exemplified in Rai's (2004) analysis of terrorism and the function of biopower. As Rai avers, the older frame of a licentious, Oriental male is redeployed in the inscriptive naming of the Islamic male. As Derrida suggests, the activity of framing, particularly in philosophical matters, extends as if borne of some Saussurian hyperbole. The scenario is thus one where frames border frames, begging the question of where the *parergon* begins and ceases. Put another way, Derrida's infamous pronouncement, *Il n'ya pas de hors-texte*, suggests the impossibility of

standing outside of contextual framing. If we consider this in addition to the notion that trace frames remain and continue to circulate in discourse, our sense of the *parergon* as a stable feature is derailed.

In his reading of Kant's aesthetic analysis, Derrida forwards another *parergonal* paradox. As I have explored in this essay, the frame deploys the illusion of coherence and internal stability. To this effect, the frame holds a work together, eliciting the spectatorial gaze. Yet, while preserving the coherence of the work, the frame concomitantly murders the 'thing itself'. This function is applicable to the notion of de/sign, exemplified in a process of signification which codifies a particular meaning while omitting others. In this sense, meaning is only ever partial, as *enframing* relies upon a network of difference in order to perform *presence*. De/sign as a 'marking out' territorializes meaning, jettisoning ambivalence and contradiction. To become a coherent thing 'in itself', the thing must be destroyed. In this gesture, the excess that would interrupt the process of signification is placed exterior to 'interior meaning'. Yet, as Derrida notes, the notion of exteriority is predicated on the *illusion of exteriority* as induced by the frame. In such a paradox, the work both requires a frame for its meaning, and yet, is destroyed by its function.

In *Memoires d'aveugle* (1993), Derrida's *abocular hypothesis* attends to the enigmatic slippage between seeing and not seeing, saying and not saying. From the Latin "ab" (out of, from, without) and "oculis" (the eye), an *abocular hypothesis* suggests a series of paradoxical facets associated with looking, and in a Derridean turn, begins to destabilize the assumption *presence* in drawing. For Derrida (1991), the figure of the artist is historically associated with privileged forms of 'seeing' and 'making visible'. Yet, *abocularity* suggests the impossibility of an artist to evade 'blindness'. While denoting the locus of the eye in seeing (from the eye, out of the eye), *abocularity* concomitantly suggests blindness (without the eye). While *cite* is implicated, such seeing

becomes predicated on a blindness. Consider the example of still life drawing. An artist attending to a certain object, or relation between objects must become 'blind' in order to 'render' the objects pictorially. As Derrida notes, both the thing and its representation cannot be attended to simultaneously. This connotes a slippage or delay between the object and its transference to the drawing surface. In this play of presence and absence, memory works to maintain a certain coherence. Yet, because the play of presence and absence is undetectable, another type of blindness, that of the process of drawing, marks the artistic endeavor. Art cannot render 'reality;' its logic is simulation.

The blindness of de/sign is too an undetectable feature. As a 'marking out,' de/sign can never explicate its *absence*. It is also bound in a discourse of *presence* that territorializes meaning. By this simulative logic, de/sign is predicated on a blindness it can never see. Meaning can never 'capture' the Real¹ without a delay, the activation of memory and Symbolic enframing. It is thus that a residue remains as *parergonal*, at the borderline which insistently separates an excess from the 'thing itself.' However, given the undecidable and porous function of the frame, the excess of, and the 'thing in itself' become intimately entwined. In this manner, de/sign can never articulate such absence, for in articulation, the movement of *presence*, new borderlines and markers. Blind spots remain, though 'filled out'.

I began this essay by suggesting that de/sign provides the coordinates of meaning. I would like to append this statement by returning to my deployment of Saussurian sign theory. While the correspondence of signifier and signified is analogous to the enframing function of de/sign, it does not properly attend to the border as an undecidable. As Derrida avers, there is always, in meaning, an 'overrun' [*debordement*] which works to "spoil...boundaries and divisions and forces us to extend the accredited concept, the dominant notion" (Derrida, 1991, p. 256). B(l)inding signification is liable to slippage, delay,

and blindness, however much “we spend...considerable time defending borders, being gatekeepers” (Neilson, 2001, 264). In the play of presence and absence, in the meaning which never completely arrives or becomes fully present to itself, the frame functions as an undecidable. Yet, while ‘overrun’ marks the inevitable return of meaning’s excess, it invariably shocks in its transgression of the frame. For what comes to the edge, to the shoreline, has yet to be attributed a name, is foreign, literally, ‘out of doors’. Again we return to the borderline, the frame of the door and its gate keeping function. However, as explored in this paper, the frame as a porous apparatus cannot fully induce the cut between interiority and exteriority. This is similar to de/sign in which a contingent ‘marking out’ can never sustain the full *presence* of the thing in itself.

New Faces/ Old Frames

Folk duo *Prussian Blue* mark the imaginary recoding of the face of racism. In response, many media accounts have attempted to resuscitate *old frames* by disclosing Lynx and Lamb as ‘white trash’ or ‘hillbillies.’ This has ostensibly averted public anxiety surrounding the image as cite of desire, preserving the ideal through the reduction of Lamb and Lynx as ‘other’. The darker aspect of the image is expunged in this naming, and in the evocation of frames through which we have culturally come to stereotypically recognize pro-white racism. By rendering them morally ‘ugly’, the media maintain a frame of childhood innocence by disclosing *Prussian Blue* as the victims of perverse parenting and products of an overwhelmingly racist environment. While this turn is crucial, and speaks to the function of multiple frames, it discharges our interrogation of everyday images of youth in the media, leaving a normalized, sanctioned image in play.

In relegating *Prussian Blue* to the position of an 'other', the girls continue to be framed as the 'new face' of white separatist racism. The anxiety that has gathered around this new frame is intimately concerned with its 'familiar features'. Lamb and Lynx appear to be so-called 'normal' teenage girls as defined by de/signer capitalism, interested in popular music, friends and 'looking pretty'. In this sense, *Prussian Blue* evoke an anxiety over signification, the fact that stable meanings are never unequivocally assured. In the transgressive slippage of innocence and racist communiqué, *naturalized* cultural frames begin to be revealed. Much like the current cultural obsession with the facelift, the new face of racism is predicated on the trace of older frames. In other words, while the face has changed, and in this case become more culturally palatable, older traces of racist enframing remain. The image, though seductive, continues to carry deadly implications.

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Notes

¹ In Lacanian terms, the Real describes the inexpressible within and without subjectivity.